New York
Theatre Critics' Reviews
1946

Volume VII, Number 25 • *Yearly Subscription $25.00* • Week of December 16, 1946

1946 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres in Other Years
Original Reviews Appeared in These Volumes

1945 Vol.

Stage Play	Page
Are You With It?	113
Billion Dollar Baby	61
Brighten the Corner	74
*Carousel	226
Day Before Spring (The)	92
Deep Are the Roots	160
Dream Girl	66
Dunnigan's Daughter	54
French Touch (The)	77
Glass Menagerie (The)	234
Hamlet	70
Home of the Brave	51
Mermaids Singing (The)	86
Polonaise	149
Pygmalion	57
*Red Mill (The)	141
Rugged Path (The)	109
*State of the Union	102
Strange Fruit	82
Up in Central Park	280
You Touched Me	164

1944 Vol.

Stage Play	Page
Anna Lucasta	143
Bloomer Girl	118
Dear Ruth	56
Follow the Girls	222
*Harvey	95
I Remember Mama	111
On the Town	45
Song of Norway	149

1943 Vol.

Stage Play	Page
*Oklahoma	341
*Voice of the Turtle (The)	199

1940 Vol.

Stage Play	Page
*Life With Father	457

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of December 16, 1946*

1946 PRODUCTIONS
Premieres During 1946
Reviews Appear in This Volume

Stage Play	Page
*Annie Get Your Gun	382
*Another Part of the Forest	247
Antigone	450
Apple of His Eye	463
Around the World	375
Bees and the Flowers (The)	336
*Born Yesterday	466
*Call Me Mister	403
Candida	412
*Christopher Blake	233
Critic (The)	380
*Cyrano de Bergerac	321
Dancer (The)	368
Duchess Misbehaves (The)	456
Duchess of Malfi (The)	304
Family Affair (A)	238
*Fatal Weakness (The)	251
Flag Is Born (A)	348
Flamingo Road	429
Front Page (The)	355
Gypsy Lady	343
*Happy Birthday	270
Haven (The)	260
Hear That Trumpet	324
Henry IV, Part I	395
Henry IV, Part II	397
*Henry VIII	271
He Who Gets Slapped	426
Hidden Horizon	340
I Like It Here	421
*Iceman Cometh (The)	315
*If the Shoe Fits	226
January Thaw	469
Jeb	446
*Joan of Lorraine	255
*John Gabriel Borkman	263
Joy Forever (A)	493
*Lady Windermere's Fan	307
*Land's End	222
Little Brown Jug	438
Loco	301
Lute Song	459
Lysistrata	298
Magnificent Yankee (The)	477
*Made In Heaven	292
Maid in the Ozarks	360
Mr. Peebles and Mr. Hooker	312
Nellie Bly	481
*No Exit	241
*O Mistress Mine	474
Obsession	330
Oedipus	380
On Whitman Avenue	391
*Park Avenue	275
*Playboy of the Western World (The)	287
*Present Laughter	283
St. Louis Woman	415
Second Best Bed	371
*Show Boat	496
Song of Bernadette (The)	418
Swan Song	386
This, Too, Shall Pass	400
*Three to Make Ready	434
Tidbits of 1946	362
Truckline Cafe	441
Uncle Vanya	389
*Years Ago	229
Yours Is My Heart	351
*What Every Woman Knows	268
Winter's Tale (The)	486
Woman Bites Dog	407
Would-Be Gentleman (The)	490

THEATRE OPENINGS
"Land's End"
Complete reviews appear in this issue

**Asterisks indicate shows scheduled to play week of Dec. 16, 1946*

Theatre Critics' Reviews brings you each week the complete reviews as they originally appeared in these New York newspapers

NEW YORK SUN — NEW YORK TIMES — NEW YORK NEWSPAPER PM — NEW YORK WORLD-TELEGRAM
NEW YORK POST — NEW YORK DAILY NEWS — NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE — NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN

All Reviews reproduced by permission.

Published by CRITICS' THEATRE REVIEWS, INC., 235 East 22nd Street, New York 10, N. Y.

"Land's End"

DAILY NEWS

DECEMBER 12, 1946

'Land's End' a Folksy Tale of Amour Among The Cornwall Rocks

By JOHN CHAPMAN

There are some nice performances in "Land's End," particularly by Helen Craig and Shirley Booth, and some moody sets by Donald Oenslager; but the play itself is a self-conscious little charade which seems to mistake literary allusion for dramatic illusion. It may be that the characters involved do follow, as they point out to each other at frequent intervals, one of the various legends about Tristan and Yseult; but this is no guarantee that they are worth bothering about.

Land's End, in Cornwall, is the jumping-off place of England—an area of spooky folk-tales and mysterious carved stones. In this setting Thomas Job has contrived, from a novel by Mary Ellen Chase, a story of two girls wanting the same man.

One of these young women (Miss Craig) is very, very good and her yearning is pure. The other (Miss Booth) is more practical, and when she yearns she gets results. Confronted by the problem of having to choose between the two, the man takes the most sensible way out and jumps off Land's End into the sea.

All of this is on a very folksy plan. The girls are fish-choppers at a seafood dock when one first meets them, and later waitresses at a hotel. The man is a handsome sailor. Always around somewhere is a sympathetic young American professor, and there is a large assortment of tourists and natives all busy being characters.

I'm sorry I couldn't be impressed by "Land's End" at the Playhouse last evening, for the play makes an honest try at establishing atmosphere and mood. But I just couldn't care enough about the people involved, even though all the actors were quite pleasant.

'LAND'S END.'

Play by Thomas Job, based on a novel by Mary Ellen Chase; staged by Robert Lewis; production designed by Donald Oenslager; incidental music by Paul Bowles; presented by Paul Feigay, in association with George Somnes, at the Playhouse Wednesday evening December 11, 1946. The cast:

Susan Pengilly	Shirley Booth
Lisa	Amelia Romano
Ellen Pascoe	Helen Craig
Mr. Trevetha	Fred Stewart
Derek Tregonny	Walter Coy
Miss Penrose	Frieda Altman
Mrs. Bond	Mabel Acker
Miss Clark	Diana de Bruti
Mr. Brooks	Clement Brace
Mrs. Brooks	Xenia Bank
Mr. Brigstocks	Joseph Foley
Mr. Darby	Sydney Boyd
Mr. Harris	Ross Chetwynd
The Professor	Theodore Newton
Dr. Gregory	Horace Cooper
Kitchen Boy	Michael Feigay
Mrs. Tregonny	Merle Maddern
Grandmother Tregonny	Minnie Dupree
The Rector	Jay Barney
First Fisherman	Joseph Foley
Second Fisherman	Sydney Boyd
Third Fisherman	Ross Chetwynd
Fourth Fisherman	Fred Stewart

SYNOPSIS: The time is between the two wars. Act I, Scene 1: Mr. Trevetha's fish chopping shed on St. Ives, Cornwall. Early evening in March. Scene 2: The Tower Hotel, Tintagel. Early afternoon, one month later. Scene 3: Ellen's and Susan's room in the Tower Hotel. Night in July, 10:30 o'clock. Act II, Scene 1: The Tower Hotel. Evening in September. Scene 2: The Men-an-Tinel Stone at Land's End. Early the next morning. Act III, Scene 1: The Tower Hotel. Breakfast time. Scene 2: Living room of the Tregonnys at Land's End. The next day. About 3 a. m.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

DECEMBER 12, 1946

= By HOWARD BARNES =

Rough Seas

CORNWALL is the setting for a stark folk tragedy in "Land's End." Thomas Job, inspired by a Mary Ellen Chase novel, has cast the Tristan and Isolde legend in a contemporary dramatic mold at the Playhouse. He has had considerable acting assistance from Helen Craig, Shirley Booth, Walter Coy and Theodore Newton. He has been given somber production effects by Donald Oenslager and ominous incidental music by Paul Bowles. For all of these theatrical virtues, the show is like a fishing net which comes up half empty.

There are a lot of effective dramatic moments floundering around in "Land's End," but they do not amount to much of a haul.

• • •

If anything, the author has been too insistent upon parallels in his new work. In an attempt to go to the feeling behind thought in a tangled romance of a fisherman and two girls "between the two wars" he has counted too heavily on old wives' tales, when he might have constructed a stern drama on a simple and ageless plot. His exposition of fatal romance has power, but it is fragmentary. The fate of Derek, torn between two loves until he crashes to his death from a Cornish cliff in a strange sacrificial gesture, would have made for sinister enough melodrama without constant allusions to the familiar Tristan story. His accenting of tragedy with stock characters, even to an American professor of anthropology, lacks definition and dramatic crescendo.

• • •

This reviewer, for one, would like to have had closer acquaintanceship with Derek's querulous mother and his daft and witch-like grandmother, performed by Merle Maddern and Minnie Dupree. As the play stands, these figures appear only fleetingly in the final scene at Land's End, where Derek is given the dog's watch funeral of a suicide while the two women who loved him so differently decide that they "need each other." The girls take on something more than two-dimensional shape as they are interpreted by the Misses Craig and Booth, but their emotional conflict is never made the center of a poignant and gripping tragedy. "Land's End" is always more ridiculous than touching.

• • •

At its best, the piece is reminiscent of J. M. Synge, which is high praise indeed. There are interludes which have the brooding simplicity of "Riders to the Sea." Unfortunately they have not been integrated in a sustained unity. Miss Craig is certainly commanding, as she plans for a long overdue wedding, while her best friend is keeping trysts with her Tristan. Miss Booth is correctly wanton as the second Isolde of the legend and Coy does an admirably restrained job with the part of the doomed fisherman. Newton adds a philosophical leit-motif to the proceedings as the professor and Frieda Altman has a moment or two of gusty humor as the proprietress of a hotel in Tintagel. "Land's End" rumbles with artistry, but it is still rumbling at the final curtain.

The Sun

DECEMBER 4, 1946

'Land's End' Offers Good Performances in a Tedious, Melancholy Drama.

By WARD MOREHOUSE.

The drama stirred itself again last night, the Playhouse went back into the theatrical business, and "Land's End," a new play by Thomas Job, was given its first performance. Job's play, based on a novel by Mary Ellen Chase, is presented by Paul Feigay, in association with George Somnes.

"Land's End" represents better fare than the theater in 48th street has had in quite a while, but it is still not good enough. It comes forth as a troubling and harassing play, affecting in moments but tedious in many others—a loosely constructed drama that falls short of being a satisfactory one by a considerable measure.

The locale is the coast of Cornwall, England; the time, a period between the two wars, and the story, presumably influenced by the Tristan and Isolde legend, that of the desperate love of two women, close friends, for a simple fisherman, who becomes a figure of tragedy.

One of the women, Ellen, has been engaged to Derek Tregonny for years. The other, Susan, comes into his life at a later stage and an overpowering physical relationship develops. The tormented Derek, pledged to Ellen, takes suicide as the only way out. The two suffering women walk together at his funeral.

There are numerous incidental scenes and characters in "Land's End" that have little meaning to the play. Shirley Booth and Helen Craig, capable actresses, have the roles of Susan and Ellen and both are moving at times—Miss Craig particularly. Theodore Newton is easy and quiet and competent as the Professor, who wanders philosophically through the evening. Walter Coy is fairly successful in his projection of the indecision of the tortured fisherman. There are good small-part performances from Frieda Altman, Horace Cooper, Merle Maddern and Mabel Acker. The inevitable Donald Oenslager has now applied his magic for scenic design to the rugged coast of Cornwall.

Robert Lewis has staged the play; accompanying music has been contributed by Paul Bowles.

"Land's End," presenting a complicated story of simple people, holds interest only at intervals. Thomas Job has undoubtedly been tremendously painstaking in his dramatization of the Chase novel, but his play comes forth as a melancholy and slow-footed drama, without suspense or sustained dramatic substance.

The New York Times

DECEMBER 12, 1946

Ground Plan of a Novel

By BROOKS ATKINSON

There is not much to report about Thomas Job's "Land's End," which was acted at the Playhouse last evening. He has made it out of Mary Ellen Chase's novel, "Dawn in Lyonesse." To appreciate the materials he is working with one should probably be familiar with the novel. For "Land's End" as a play seems insufficiently written to evoke the sensation of a legendary romance or to arouse much interest in the characters. The narrative is enigmatic—perhaps deliberately so; and the performance is a succession of casually connected attitudes that are emptily portentous in the acting and direction.

Apparently Mr. Job is endeavoring to tell the story of an imaginative country betrothal that becomes sublimely romantic when the bride reads the Tristan and Iseult legend. She is a fish chopper in St. Ives in Cornwall, which is the Iseult country, and she has long been engaged to an industrious fisherman. While working as a waitress in a fashionable hotel, she learns about the Iseult legend. As she reads about it, her imagination is awakened and she begins to interpret her dull betrothal to a local boy in terms of immortal romance.

No doubt the novel had room enough to develop this theme in terms of an awakened character and to contrast idealized romance with the boorishness of sophisticated guests in a summer hotel. But Mr. Job has written it sparingly. "Land's End" is forever reaching after exalted moods that lie beyond its grasp.

Under Bob Lewis' direction, the performance gives an unfortunate impression of churning thickly clotted passion. Donald Oenslager has surrounded it with pretentious settings that reek of symbolism. Since the actors are doing, not what comes naturally, but what they have been told to do, they must not be held to account for trying to deliver more than the script contains. Frieda Altman has an actable part as a fussy hotel housekeeper, and acts it with a neat sense of comedy. Theodore Newton does well with the intelligible part of a friendly professor. But it is to be feared that no one could do much with the shadowy parts that the others have to play. The story of "Land's End" should be read in a novel.

PM EXCLUSIVE

DECEMBER 13, 1946

Kronenberger

A Dramatization That Never Becomes a Drama

PM Reviews

Land's End is a respectable undertaking, to be greeted with good will. But it is one more dramatized novel that never gets dramatized. There is a continuing sense, at the Playhouse, of sketchiness and disjointedness; of something first squeezed into too large a frame, and then oddly failing to fill it. In *Land's End*, moreover, the trouble is not simply technical: the *kind* of novel Mr. Job has adapted offers stage problems of theme and mood that have not been met.

Mr. Job's scene is the Cornwall of *Tristram and Iseult*; his story a three-cornered romantic tragedy in no way duplicating, but in some measure dominated by Iseult's. A young hotel waitress who is rather prosaically engaged to a fisherman learns Iseult's passionate story from an American professor, and comes to view herself, and the nature of love, on the same high terms. Meanwhile a fellow-waitress and the fisherman have fallen violently in love; but when the fisherman attempts to break off with his fiancee, there is something so intense and dedicated about her that he cannot. Torn two ways, in the end he can only throw himself off a cliff.

* * *

As a kind of folk tale of tragic love, *Land's End* has not the sustained emotion to be moving or even very dramatic. It needs a good deal of filling in and of building up; Mr. Job has had to tell his story in a series of choppy scenes, catching what vital atmosphere he can through stock devices, and relying for punch on rather old-fashioned bits of theater. The legend that should haunt the story more often than not hobbles it; there is very little passion in the play, and no poetry. One is moderately interested by parts of it, but that is a fatally chilly reaction to such high-voltage material.

I haven't read Miss Chase's novel, but I suspect that more than its main narrative has been considerably dehydrated. Miss Chase, one guesses, strongly counterpointed the primitive love story against the smug, genteel life of the Summer hotel where the two girls worked. Not too patly done, this could have been effective. But Mr. Job has had to do it skimpily, and except in one scene, it fails of effect. There is something too thin or hollow about most of *Land's End* — its drama, its writing, its atmosphere.

As the fiancee, Helen Craig gives the best performance of the evening, one that has force and appeal. Shirley Booth — a good actress — seems miscast as the hot-blooded rival. Walter Coy hasn't a great deal to do as the fisherman, but does it reasonably well. Theodore Newton makes an agreeable professor, and several smaller parts are played agreeably. Mr. Oenslager's sets range from the good to the not-so-good.

—LOUIS KRONENBERGER

New York Post

DECEMBER 12, 1946

Job Play Is Lugubrious Drama About Love in Cornwall

By Richard Watts Jr.

If, as seems unlikely, you are looking for moral lessons in your plays, you will find one embedded in "Land's End," Thomas Job's dramatization of Mary Ellen Chase's novel called "Dawn in Lyonesse." It is a rather specialized moral, and the chances are that, if only for geographical reasons, it will not apply to you, but it is there. As nearly as I could discern, Mr. Job's message is that if you are a prospective bride and live in the gloomy reaches of the Cornish coast, it is not advisable to read too much about the sad love of Tristan and Iseult.

At least, it appeared last night that if the heroine of "Land's End" hadn't been informed of the famous and melancholy legend of doomed sweethearts by a slangy American professor of archaeology and encouraged to identify herself with the beauteous lady from Ireland, she mightn't have made it so hard for her fiance to tell her that he had switched his love to another. Then there would have been no play, which, with all due respect to Mr. Job's patent sincerity, might have been just as well.

Not a Parallel

I don't know anything about the novel, but in the dramatization the playwright is not attempting to tell a story which offers a modern parallel to the legend. Instead, he is trying to show how the lives of sensitive modern people can be influenced by the fact of their living on the scene of an unforgotten medieval tragedy. He is, however, by no means successful in his effort.

Instead, the impression is created that he attempted to give poetry and importance to a commonplace narrative of an unhappy contemporary romance, ending in suicide, recrimination and the cries of a mad old grandmother, by a desperate effort to tie it in with one of the world's most celebrated love stories. Despite Donald Oenslager's handsomely atmospheric Cornish sets, the tale of modern love and woe Mr. Job has to tell is not helped by any evocation of the shades of Tristan and his Iseult.

"Land's End" has a few points. It possesses a certain dignity and earnestness which are not to be scorned, and there is at least one scene that is touching. This is a well-staged episode in which the drama's waitress heroine receives a postcard telling of her fiance's death while the shrill and demanding hotel guests keep complaining about her slowness in serving their breakfasts.

Effective Moment

There is likewise a quietly effective moment when a cruel and spinsterish lady who manages the hotel suddenly becomes warm and human as she and the heroine start reading of Iseult's love. The acting, too, is generally good, and Robert Lewis' staging is helpful, particularly in consideration of the sometimes sprawling quality characteristic of the dramatized novel.

Nevertheless, "Land's End" fails pretty completely. Where it aims to be poetic it is merely verbose. Where it strives to be tragic it is only heavily lugubrious. For all its sad story of doomed, unhappy lovers, it never succeeds in being deeply moving, and only on rare occasions is it even touching. And it never approaches success in its difficult task of suggesting that the spirit Iseult is brooding ominously over a modern Cornish tragedy.

Of the performances, Helen Craig's portrayal of the heroine is best, being at all times straightforward and understanding. Shirley Booth is intermittently effective as her faithless friend and successful rival, while Walter Coy as the lover and Theodore Newton as the professor are helpful. But it is to no avail.